

Presiding Justice Dickinson takes oath to start new term

January 3, 2012

Mississippi Supreme Court Presiding Justice Jess H. Dickinson of Gulfport took the oath of office Tuesday, Jan. 3, to begin a new eight-year term on the court. Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. gave him the oath of office.

“Justice Dickinson is absolutely invaluable to this court,” Chief Justice Waller said.

Presiding Justice Dickinson said, “I am grateful to the citizens of Mississippi for granting me the privilege of serving another term on this great Court. I am more committed than ever to my oath of office, which requires me to ‘administer justice without respect to persons’ and to ‘do equal right to the poor and to the rich’.”

Presiding Justice Dickinson was re-elected in November 2010. The District 2, Place 1 seat on the court has a 14-month delay between the election and the beginning of the new term.

Justice Dickinson joined the Supreme Court in January 2004. He became a Presiding Justice in February 2011. He previously served for a year by special appointment as a circuit judge for the 12th District of Forrest and Perry counties.

Presiding Justice Dickinson grew up in Charleston. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Mississippi State University and his law degree, *cum laude*, from the University of Mississippi School of Law. He practiced law for a year in Jackson, and for 20 years in Gulfport.

He is chair of the Supreme Court Rules Committee on the Legal Profession. He is a founding member of the Mississippi Access to Justice Commission, which works to improve poor people’s access to civil legal representation. He is a frequent speaker at access to justice events across the country. The Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project honored him in 2009 as one of its Pro Bono Pioneers. He was honored as Adjunct Professor of the Year 2009 at Mississippi College School of Law, where he teaches evidence and trial practice. He was named a Fellow of the Mississippi Bar Foundation in 2010. He received the Chief Justice Award in 2004 for his work as a special trial judge. He serves on the National Advisory Counsel for the American Judicature Society.

He plays 31 musical instruments. He formed rock bands in high school and college, and worked briefly as a studio musician. Although he chose a career in the legal profession, he and his wife, Janet, continued to play music for banquets and church programs for 30 years. He formed the band Bluegrass Appeal three years ago. The band performed Christmas music at the Capitol the past two years.

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